

# COFFEE, TEA, OR CHICHA? COMMENSALITY AND CULINARY PRACTICE IN THE MIDDLE ORINOCO FOLLOWING COLONIAL CONTACT

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*The young Piaroa dressed in his loincloth rode up on his bicycle; he had strung three or four freshly caught fish on the handlebars. He dismounted and took the fish into the roadside shop where he exchanged them for a can of Coca Cola and a small packet of Cheese Tris, and then pedaled off munching happily. (Field observation, Parguaza, Estado Bolívar, 1999).*

Eating and drinking involve a long chain of culturally determined processes including production, distribution, preparation, and, finally consumption of foods. This can be summed up in the term «foodways,<sup>1</sup>» and includes both the biological and socio-cultural aspects of food. Foodways are frequently deeply embedded in the cultural order, and are common diacritical elements in the definition of «Us» and «Them.» It is a realm imbued with ritual behavior and symbolic meaning that clearly transcends the nutritional aspects of eating behavior, and choices are rarely grounded in «economic rationale,<sup>2</sup>» as seen in the citation above. Memory and nostalgia are important ingredients in the development and maintenance of different cuisines, and the challenge to reproduce the exact taste and texture of a remembered dish is the bane of many young cooks. At the same time, the new «taste sensation,<sup>3</sup>» consisting of exotic foods and beverages imported from distant regions, can provide a venue for contests of display and status in circumstances where tradition is being questioned by certain sectors of the society, or where dominance and power are played out both in the political arena and on the table.

In colonial situations, as in other highly contested circumstances, foods often play an important role in the distinction of the different sectors involved, in terms of ethnic identity, social status, and gender relationships. Much can be gleaned from the written sources regarding foodways in colonial situations. Nonetheless, to the archaeologist studying these contexts, food is generally visible only indirectly, either in botanical or animal remains, or, more frequently, at least in the tropical areas where organic remains are poorly preserved, in the tools used in the production and processing of foodstuffs, in vessels used to store and transport food and drink, in cooking utensils, and serving dishes that play a part in the culinary sphere. Pottery, then, can be very helpful in the exploration of culinary practice and commensality in archaeological investigations focusing on colonial situations (Burley 1989; Dietler, 1990a, 1990b, 1995; Ewen 1991; Franklin 2001; Rodríguez-Alegría 2005; Silliman 2004; Souza 2002; Symanski 2002; Van Buren 1999; Voss 2005).

In this article I concentrate on the local and imported ceramic remains recovered from 13 colonial and republican period sites in the Middle Orinoco study area, located between the Parguaza and Suapure Rivers (Figure 1). These include indigenous settlements, towns, burial caves, the mission site of Nuestra Señora de los Angeles, and the fort of San Francisco Javier de Marimarota. The latter sites were instrumental in the establish-

1. «The modes of feeling, thinking, and behaving about food that are common to a cultural group» Simoons (1967:3 in Goody 1982:38).

ment of Spanish settlement in the region. The developmental sequence for the study area is divided into 5 periods and we have located archaeological sites corresponding to all of these with the exception of the Conquest period (Table 1).

A contextual analysis of the pottery, in the light of historical documents and oral tradition, serves to illuminate its role in the construction of identity, the imposition and maintenance of colonial hierarchies and power structures, indigenous resistance to colonial strategies, and the contribution of different sectors to the emerging cultural order. I will emphasize the transformations in culinary practice and commensality following colonial contact. I argue that the European colonizers were highly dependent on indigenous knowledge of foods and their preparation, as inferred from the continuity of traditional ceramic technologies associated with culinary practice. Nonetheless, several transformations in vessel form, decorative style, and technology of production point to modifications in cuisine, cooking practices, and the etiquette associated with food and beverage consumption following contact. At the same time, the analysis of the differential distribution of imported and local ceramics provides insights into their role in the construction of social hierarchy under colonial rule, especially in mission contexts. Following Independence, the adoption of highly decorated tableware by certain indigenous sectors is a sign of the appropriation of both new foods and beverages and the social etiquette involved in their consumption. This signals a move toward accommodation to the newly founded Republic by indigenous communities who were increasingly involved in commodity production and commercial transactions with the *Criollo* sector.

## THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS

A move away from unilineal models of culture change in archaeological research on colonialism has redirected attention to indigenous agency, resistance, and creative reinterpretation of novel artifacts into existing categories of meaning (Dietler 1990a, 1990b; Sahlins 1992, 1995; 1998; Lyons and Papadopoulos 2002). Without denying the coercive and often violent mechanisms used by European powers to impose new social, political, and economic regimes, archaeologists have begun to pay closer attention to different strategies that included cooperation, code-switching or apparent assimilation, passive and active resistance, and outright opposition (Funari 2004, 2006; Funari and Dominguez 2004; Trigger 1975, 1985; Schrire 1991, 1995). It is increasingly recognized that under certain circumstances, some local groups were actually favored, at least initially, by colonial contact, and underwent processes of cultural enhancement and unheard-of affluence (Salisbury and Tooker 1984; Trigger 1984; Sahlins 1992; Whitehead 1993). At the same time, it has become evident that local cultural perceptions and cosmologies shaped the desires that underlay initial entanglement, especially through trade; in this way negotiation on the periphery dictated the ways and means of the colonialists, who had to adjust their strategies to local demands (Sahlins 1988; Dietler 1998; Scaramelli and Tarble 2003; Scaramelli and Tarble de Scaramelli 2005).

Influenced by these approaches to the colonial situation, some archaeologists have turned their attention to the symbolic aspects of consumption, and the role of goods and commodities in the definition of identity, ethnicity, and class. Early studies of consumption revolved around the assessment of «socioeconomic status,» through the presence of certain types of artifact, such as ceramic tablewares (Cook, Yamin et al. 1996). Nonetheless, these studies tended to neglect the role of agency and motivation in consumer choice. As Howson (1990 p. 86) has argued with respect to the analysis of distinctive patterns of consumption in the context of Southern plantations, the analysis of material objects offers more than just a distinction between social groups; it can reveal the meaningful contexts of their acquisition and use, not just the structural relationship between their users.

More recent work addresses the symbolic dimension of material culture and its expression in agency. As Cook et al. (1996 p. 53) argue, «[t]his symbolic content is a crucial element in a process that converts time and labor into a medium of exchange, which is then itself converted into material things, into personal and group identity, into self and community.» The acquisition of an article converts it into a possession with «particular inseparable connotations,» a meaning that helps to define the owner at both the individual and group level. In this way, it is clear that material goods are not a mere reflection of purchasing power, but rather play active roles in the creation, operation and maintenance of social relations. The choices involved in their acquisition contribute to the construction of a sense of self-worth and definition, even though the consumer does not control the act of production. This emphasis on the meaning of goods in different contexts, and the active use of objects to define the consumer has opened up new lines of inquiry in historical archaeology that promises to complement previous approaches to colonial contact (Allen 1998; Van Buren 1999; Rodríguez-Alegría 2005). Dietler has expressed this view eloquently,

People use alien contacts for their own political agendas, and they give new meanings to borrowed cultural elements according to their own cosmologies. Foreign objects are of interest not for what they represent in the society of origin but for their culturally specific meaning and perceived utility in the context of consumption. Hence the colonial encounter must be contextualized in the conjuncture of the different social and cultural logics involved (Dietler 1998 p. 299).

I have undertaken a long-term contextual analysis of production and consumption in a diverse selection of colonial and republican sites in the Orinoco, with particular emphasis on the ceramic record. I consider the material items produced and used by the plural society that emerged following colonial intervention to be active elements in the construction of the evolving colonial culture. Therefore, the material manifestations of processes of interaction will be visible in the archaeological record as ceramic production and consumption styles are created, modified, and shared. These processes varied through time, depending on the type of colonial situation that prevailed. As the Middle Orinoco shifted from a frontier to a periphery, and as colonial strategies changed emphasis from missionary conversion, to secular agricultural and pastoral enterprises, and finally to exploitative schemes ranging from forest products to mining, so the relationships between the different sectors of the population were forged and transformed. The presence of thriving indigenous communities in the area today demonstrates the resilience of this sector. At the same time, the emergence of a *Criollo* population attests to the complex mechanisms of appropriation, assimilation, and *mestizaje* that contributed to the distinctive cultural patterns that characterize the area in the present.

## REGIONAL CHRONOLOGY

The ceramic remains recovered in the study area were fundamental in the definition of a regional chronology that spans the 600 years between the Late Pre-Hispanic Period and the Republican Period. The sequence is based on the definition of ceramic production styles for both local and imported pottery. I have defined 4 new ceramic styles: San Isidro, Parguaza, Pueblo Viejo, and Caripito, based on distinctive modes of paste, color, vessel form, decorative technique, and motifs. Several styles in the sequence correspond to previously defined styles, phases or series. The Los Mangos, San Isidro, and Pueblo Viejo styles are associated with the Arauquinoid series, and represent a local sequence that extends this series into the post-contact era (Roosevelt, 1978, 1980, 1997; Tarble 1994; Zucchi et al. 1984). The Valloid series (Tarble and Zucchi 1984) also continues into the historic era and is represented by the Valloid materials found in the Early Colonial Period and, tentatively, in the Parguaza style of the Late Colonial Period. The Caripito style is the latest of the styles defined for the sequence; it dominates in all of the sites of the Republican Period, and the characteristic caraipé temper has a broad distribution in the region (Zucchi 1992, 2000). The imported ceramics, mostly of European origin, found at the sites, combined with other evidence, such as glass beads, bottles, and metal artifacts, provided reference dates for the sequence (Figure 2). These dates are quite well defined for the Early and Late Colonial Period; nonetheless, the Republican Period spans nearly 100 years. This period will surely be subdivided into shorter time units as further evidence is retrieved.

Several trends can be observed in the ceramic sequence. **Continuity** is seen in the ceramic technology employed for the production of local ceramics throughout the sequence; local pottery dominates in sites throughout the colonial period and continues as the preferred utilitarian ware into the Republican Period. Local tempering materials, such as sand, sponge spicule (*cauixi*), and burnt bark (*caraipé*) are used in all the pottery, and production technique remains virtually unchanged. At the same time, the **disappearance** of certain ceramic styles suggests demographic upheaval in the study area. I have noted the lack of continuity in the ceramic styles prevalent in the Late Pre-Contact Period, especially notable in the sponge-spicule ware. There are marked difference between the Los Mangos style of the Pre-Contact Period and the San Isidro style of the Early Colonial Period, notable both in vessel form and decorative treatment. This suggests that a portion of the local population of the Middle Orinoco abandoned the riverine zone following early contact, possibly in response to the introduction of disease and slave raiding. Further investigation is required to fill in the 200-year gap between Late Pre-Contact and Early Colonial Periods. I have also noted a tendency toward the **simplification** of the local ceramic materials through time, especially in reference to vessel form and decoration. This process can be explained in terms of substitution, prohibition, and demographic demise. Finally, the **appearance** of new ceramic styles suggests the influx of new population components, associated with the Reduction system and, later, with the influx or genesis of mestizo and *Criollo* settlers in the area.

## THE ROLE OF CERAMICS IN THE PRODUCTION OF COLONIAL CULTURE

Ceramic analysis sheds light on the cultural makeup of the colonial situation in the Middle Orinoco, and the role of ceramics in identifying different sectors of the society and the relationships that evolved between these sectors through time. I argue that the multiplicity of styles found in the Early Colonial period served as material markers of identity in the plural cultural setting of the Early Colonial missions and at Late Colonial towns. At the same time, I propose that ceramics served as status markers and contributed to the construction of the hierarchical order of colonial towns. In this case, analysis reveals that imported ceramics and local ceramics have a differential distribution in the towns, both under missionary rule, and in later secular settings (See Tables 2 and 3 and Figures 3 and 4). This contrasts with the distribution found in the outlying indigenous sites of the Early Colonial period, where I noted no significant differential distribution (Figure 5). To the contrary, in these sites, imported ceramics are quite rare, and accompanied by other items that clearly fall into the category of trade goods: glass beads, knife blades.

I propose, then, that the circumscription of the use of imported tableware to the central sector of the town sites materially reinforced the hierarchical social divisions imposed under colonial rule. This distinction was further reinforced through the differential access to European style buildings that are concentrated in the central area of the towns. Even so, local ceramics are overwhelmingly predominant at all the sites of the Colonial period, and continue in significant numbers during the Republican period, indicating the settlers' dependence on indigenous technology, knowledge, and labor.

It is significant that in the Republican period the earlier Colonial Period towns are abandoned, and a new pattern of dispersed settlement predominates in the study area, where refuse is sparsely scattered on the surface of small, shallow sites. At the Republican sites, we have not been able to detect a differential distribution of imported and locally made wares. These sites are known through oral tradition to have been occupied by members of the indigenous Mapoyo community. The undifferentiated distribution of imported and local pottery in these sites points to an egalitarian social structure of the inhabitants that contrasts with the class and ethnic stratification evident in the earlier town sites of Pueblo Viejo and Nuestra Señora de los Ángeles de Pararuma. Therefore, it appears that following the expulsion of the missions, the remaining indigenous groups opted for non-nucleated settlements, out of the reach of the few Criollo towns that survived in the area.

## FOODWAYS IN THE COLONIAL PERIOD OF THE ORINOCO

Although it was possible to distinguish between tablewares used in different sectors of the mission sites, especially in the limited access to imported European wares found in the more central areas of the sites, the foods that were eaten in all of these contexts were almost entirely appropriated from the indigenous sector. This is due, in part, to the poor adaptation of most European cultigens to the tropical climate and soils of the Orinoco. At the same time, the European colonists were not inclined to engage in agricultural activities themselves. Therefore, during the Early Colonial Period, the missionaries and soldiers had to adopt indigenous cultigens, and depended on Native knowledge and labor for both the production and the preparation of food.

The missionaries describe the diet of the indigenous inhabitants of the region as based on fish, game, cultivated plants, and a variety of gathered wild products. Fish was the principal protein among the riverine groups, while game was preferred by the forest-dwellers. Manioc (*Manihot esculenta*) and maize (*Zea mays*) were the principal carbohydrates, although a number of other roots (ñame (*Dioscorea alata*), batata (*Ipomoea batatas*), guapo, cumapana) were cultivated and gathered wild (Gilij 1987 Vol. 2, p. 247). Corn was eaten fresh or dried, ground or pounded, prepared as a dough, wrapped in leaves, and boiled in ollas (*caizú*), or shaped into small round cakes (*arepas*) and baked on a griddle (Ibid. p. 254). Manioc was prepared in different ways, depending on the variety. Sweet manioc could be boiled in pots and eaten with no further preparation (Ibid. p. 247). Bitter manioc, on the other hand, had to be peeled, grated, and squeezed to eliminate the poisonous liquid (Ibid. pp. 249-253). This liquid was boiled in pots and used as a sauce or condiment (*catara* or *yare*); the poison is eliminated with the cooking (Ibid. p. 252). After squeezing the grated manioc, the remaining pulp is sieved and then baked on a *budare* or ceramic griddle. There, upon contact with the heat, it solidifies into a large round cake, that is placed in the sun to dry, and is then storable for several months. Alternately, the manioc pulp could be stirred in a shallow bowl over the fire, producing a dry meal (*mañoco*), that was used as an addition to soups and stews (Ibid. p. 253).

Fish and aquatic fauna, including turtles, alligators, and manatees; game, such as deer, monkey, birds, tapir, ant eater, armadillo, iguana, snake, wild pig (Ibid. pp. 263-266); and a variety of larvae, spiders, ants, and other

species provided the protein in the diet. Meats were often smoked over a slow fire to preserve them, or barbequed. Gilij mentions that meats and fish were cooked in large, shallow vessels that he compares to European *cazuelas* or casseroles (Ibid. p. 252). Palm fruits and nuts (*Acrocomia sclerocarpa*, *Maximiliana regia*, *Mauritia flaeuosa*, *Pichiuvau bactris gasipaes*, *Scheelea geigia*, among others) were gathered and used in the preparation of beverages and for the extraction of oil (Ibid. Vol. 1 pp. 163-167); large *ollas* or *tinajas* were used for this purpose. Turtle and, to a lesser extent, alligator oil, made from eggs, was highly esteemed; huge amounts of turtle oil were produced during the yearly nesting season, both for local consumption and for trade (Gumilla 1944; Bueno 1965; Humboldt 1985; Gilij 1987 pp. 110-114). The oil was rendered in black, flat-bottomed bowls and stored in vessels made for that purpose. Fruits such as the papaya (*Carica papaya*), pineapple (*Ananas comosus*), cashew (*Anacardium occidentale*), guayaba (*Psidium guajava*) and passion fruit (*Passiflora sp.*) (Ibid. pp. 194-198), complemented the diet, as well as many less well-known wild fruits (Ibid. pp. 160-163). Honey provided sweets (Ibid. p. 247). Squash (*Cucurbita maxima*), beans (*Phaseolus sp.*), and different leafy plants were used as vegetables (Ibid. pp. 182-183), while chilies (*Capsicum sp.*) were the principal condiment (Ibid. p. 187). Cacao (*Theobroma cacao L.*) was native to the Orinoco, but only used as a fruit; the seeds were left for animals to eat (Ibid. p. 169).

Beverages were prepared from a variety of fruits. Nonetheless, the most frequent drink was a form of beer (*chicha*), made from corn, manioc, and other starchy roots that were allowed to ferment in large open jars. The Indians produced different types of *chicha* for different occasions; the most highly fermented brews were reserved for dances and ceremonies, while the lighter versions were served daily as part of the meal. Small ceramic bowls or gourd *totumas* (*Crescentia cujete*) were used to drink the *chicha* and other beverages. In Table 4, I offer a possible correlation between the vessel forms described in the written texts for the Early Colonial period and those found in the archaeological sites corresponding to this period.

The Europeans were successful in introducing some new crops into the Orinoco region, especially those that were native to the tropics: sugar cane (*Sacharum officinarum*), coffee (*Coffea arabica*), rice, and citrus fruits, such as oranges and limes (Ibid. p. 170, 203). The plantain (*Musa paradisiaca*) spread rapidly throughout the lowlands following initial contact, and was well established among the Indians by the time the Jesuits arrived (Ibid. p. 297). The local population quickly adopted sugar cane as well, and adopted wooden presses to extract the juice. Of the domestic animals that were brought over from the old world, cattle, horses, mules, pigs, and chickens adapted well to the area.<sup>2</sup> Although cattle and horses were incorporated into indigenous productive modes in other parts of the country, such as in the Guajira peninsula, the Middle Orinoco groups adopted neither on a large scale.<sup>3</sup> European and *Criollo* cattle ranchers eventually displaced the savanna dwelling Indians, and violent disputes erupted following accusations of hunting or poaching (Petrullo 1939; Morey and Metzger 1974; Henley 1988; Mitrani 1988). At the same time, many runaway mission Indians, poor mestizos, and free blacks became peons on the cattle ranches, contributing to the emergence of the Llanero as a distinctive identity (Samudio A. 1992; Montiel Acosta 1993).

The Europeans quickly adopted many elements of the native diet, along with the implements used for their preparation. Because wheat and other grains did not do well in the area, and imported products were expensive and hard to obtain, the Europeans depended on manioc, plantains, and maize for carbohydrates. Turtle oil substituted for olive oil, both for cooking and for illumination (Gilij 1987 Vol. 3 p. 70). The Europeans consumed most fish and game known to the Indians, including monkey (Ibid. Vol. 1 pp. 217, 224-231); however, the missionaries describe their repugnance for snake, iguana, and insects (Ibid. pp. 233, 237).

In the mission context, sugar cane was used to make cane syrup and to distill *aguardiente*, for sale to colonial settlers, soldiers, and Indians (Ibid. Vol. 3, p. 71) (Samudio A. 1992 p. 757). Cattle provided milk and milk products such as cheese, but the missionaries had to wait to establish the herds before they could use them for meat; they therefore depended on the Native men to hunt and fish (Gilij 1987 Vol. 2 pp. 135-139). Wine was expensive and was reserved for Mass (Gilij 1987 Vol. 2 p. 222, Vol. 3 p. 71).

Under these circumstances, the missionaries and other European settlers were forced to adopt both local products and local techniques and implements for their preparation and consumption. Indigenous labor, both in

2. The Jesuit missions in the Llanos of what is today Colombia were supported by large haciendas; in the Orinoco, the only hacienda mentioned in the documents was that at Carichana, where 2000 head of cattle were inventoried in 1767 (Samudio 1992, p. 746).

3. According to Samudio (1992) the Jesuits had large *haciendas* (cattle ranches) in the Western Llanos of Colombia, where indigenous men were trained as *vaqueros* (cowboys).

the fields and in the kitchen, was crucial to the survival of the missions (Silliman 2001; Silliman 2004).<sup>4</sup> The presence of the ceramic griddle throughout the archaeological sequence testifies to the incorporation of *casabe* and *arepas* into the *Criollo* diet as substitutes for wheat breads. Nevertheless, several lines of evidence point to certain modifications in the indigenous gastronomic customs that suggest the «Transformation» of culinary practices. On the one hand, while indigenous groups tend to prepare and consume vegetables and meats separately (Henley 1988; Overing and Kaplan 1988), the Europeans and, possibly, Africans, introduced the combination of these ingredients in dishes such as stews and soups (*sancochos*). Gilij narrates that some Europeans preferred to make thinner versions of *casabe*, somewhat like lasagna (Gilij 1987 Vol. 2 p. 253). They also experimented with certain plants, seeking to create local substitutes for tea, and vinegar and leafy vegetables (Gilij, 1987 Vol. 1 p. 170; Vol. 3 pp. 70-71). Both the *hallaca* and the *arepa* were incorporated into the *Criollo* cuisine, but with the addition of European ingredients. In the case of the *hallaca*, onions, garlic, raisins, olives, and capers were added to the meat filling; wrapped and boiled in plantain leaves, hallacas are today one of the most popular Venezuelan dishes. *Arepas* also form a major part of the modern Venezuelan diet, and are frequently consumed with cheese, stewed meats, and eggs. Fried foods, such as plantain slices or *empanadas*, made with corn dough filled with various meat or cheese combinations, are another innovation probably introduced by the Europeans.

I suggest that the ceramic record reflects some of these changes in culinary practice. Although the Europeans adopted many of the indigenous foods of the area, they redefined them culturally and made them their own. This process is especially evident in the increase in popularity of the open-mouthed, out-flaring olla (vessel forms 9.2, 13.2, 13.3) (Figures 6 and 7) that became frequent in the Late Colonial period, and that I have shown to have been particularly associated with the central «European/Mestizo» sector of the settlement at Pueblo Viejo. This type of olla would have been ideal for the preparation of stews, soups, rice, and beans, all of which were central to the diet of the European or *Criollo* settlers. These dishes were eaten with *casabe* or *arepas*, and the *budares* (vessel forms 111, 112 and 113) used to cook them continue to appear throughout the archaeological sequence. It is interesting to note that the distribution of the *budare* is limited to the periphery of the Pueblo Viejo site, and suggests that living space was distributed along «ethnic»/racial lines, with a predominance of indigenous population in the outer sectors of the site (see Díaz, 2005 and Scaramelli, 2006 for a more detailed discussion of this site). The increase in size and frequency of the *budares* in the Late Colonial and Republican sites indicates that *casabe* production intensified in the indigenous communities to cover the demand of the *Criollo* sector (Tavera-Acosta 1954 p. 235; Chaffanjon 1986 pp.189-190; Crevaux 1988 pp. 272, 287; Morisot 2002). (Figure 7).

## CERAMIC EVIDENCE FOR COMMENSALITY AND CONSUMPTION

One of the questions that guided our analysis concerned the manner in which differing practices of commensality could be expressed in the size and shape of the ceramic vessels used for serving and consuming food and beverages. Under the mission regime, we expected to find variations in the practices associated with different sectors of the site, where larger serving vessels would be associated with the indigenous sector, associated with occasional communal meals. At the same time, feasting would be indicated by the presence of large pots used to ferment beverages.

Written sources offer some insights into indigenous practices of commensality. Both Gilij (1987) and Gumilla (1944) describe meals as they are served in polygynous households. In these contexts, each wife lives in a separate sector with her own hearth. The husband gives each of his wives a portion of the fish or game he has obtained, in accordance with the number of children she has. Each woman prepares a separate meal for her husband, and, upon his return from his daily activities, she lays out a mat and places on it a plate of food, along with *casabe* or *caizú*. Each wife does the same, and then retires to her hearth while the husband eats in silence. At the end of the meal, each wife offers him a cup of *chicha* and then retires to eat with her children. (Gumilla 1944 Vol. 2 p. 255; Gilij 1987 Vol. 2 p. 221). This procedure was followed in order to avoid conflicts among the wives.

Gumilla mentions communal meals offered as compensation for work parties, although he offers no description of the actual presentation of the food (Gumilla 1944 Vol. 2 p. 209). Ritual dances were also the occasion for feasting. These dances ranged from daily affairs, during which unfermented *chicha* was served, to special occasions, for

4. Elsewhere, I discuss the role of indigenous women in the negotiation of the conditions of mission life (Tarble de Scaramelli, 2006).

which strong *chicha* was prepared and which lasted for several days. Although it was usually the women who prepared and served the *chicha*, only the men partook in the drinking on some occasions, in which the drink was said to be the gift of sacred serpents (Gilij, 1987 Vol. 2 p. 237). The *chicha* was prepared in large vessels and served in ceramic or gourd bowls.

Over 100 years later, in 1887, Morisot offered a description of the meals taken in San Fernando de Atabapo, in the Upper Orinoco; in this case, the household was made up of an indigenous wife and a *Criollo* husband (Morisot 2002 p. 423). Once again the meal is described as taken in silence; the women and children eat apart from the men. Morisot comments that no beverages were served with the meal, although coffee was served afterwards. Implements were rudimentary; although some forks and spoons were available, most meals were eaten with the fingers and the tablecloth served as a napkin.

From the above descriptions, it appears that indigenous practices became intertwined with European practices of commensality through time: silent meals, the separation of men and women, and various combinations of etiquette involving implements, tables and chairs, or the use of mats on the floor. This amalgamation is probably attributable to the high percentage of mixed marriages, where indigenous women married European or *Criollo* men, and attempted to maintain their customs of food preparation and mealtime etiquette. The frequent employment of indigenous and African-descent servants in the *Criollo* households also may have contributed to the fusion of practices, as did surely the extramarital relations that emerged between *Criollo* men and indigenous or mestizo women.

The ceramic record provides further insight into commensality as related to ethnic identity and its transformations through time. The pre-Colombian period, as represented by Los Mangos (BO31-D) and other habitation sites, offers a broad inventory of vessel forms. Several large ollas were recovered, with rim diameters ranging between 36 cm and 46 cm. These were likely used to ferment *chicha* or to prepare and store other beverages. Large serving platters and bowls with diameters greater than 40 cm are also present, along with many smaller bowls that may have served as individual drinking vessels. This pattern is also observed in the Early Colonial period sites of Piedra Rajada (BO-112) and San Isidro (BO-111), which I have interpreted to be indigenous satellite sites to the Mission of Pararuma (BO-119). In contrast, the mission site presents a different pattern, with very few ollas and a predominance of serving vessels. These continue to show a broad range of diameters, suggesting their use as individual serving dishes and large serving platters. This data suggests that the indigenous sector at these sites continued to prepare and serve meals following traditional practices, with an emphasis on shared serving dishes for meals and individual drinking vessels and large storage pots for beverages. The European sector, in contrast, is associated with imported plates that range between 18 cm and 24 cm diameter, suggesting the consumption of meals on individual plates, at least for certain members of the community.

The Late Colonial period shows an increase in the availability of imported tableware, primarily associated with the central sector of the site of Pueblo Viejo (BO-100), and overwhelmingly predominant in the site of La Pica (BO-120). Plates, bowls, cups, and saucers are the most popular forms found in the imported wares, implying the imposition of European manners surrounding the consumption of food and drink. Nonetheless, in the periphery of the Pueblo Viejo site, large ollas and serving platters continue to be found, indicating the maintenance of traditional practices of commensality and feasting in this sector of the community.

The Republican period contrasts markedly with the earlier periods. In these sites, imported tableware almost completely replaces indigenous serving wares, even in sites that are claimed to be ancient Mapoyo habitation sites. Large serving platters and ollas are rare; this may be correlated with smaller populations residing at these sites and/or a tendency toward individual rather than communal consumption practices. The large quantity of cups and saucers points to the adoption of coffee, along with the etiquette involved in its consumption. The virtual disappearance of large ollas and the ubiquity of diverse liquor bottles suggest the substitution of *chicha* with commercial alcoholic beverages (Scaramelli and Tarble 2003).

In previous sections, I have noted that imported ceramic artifacts, especially tablewares, increase dramatically in frequency in the indigenous sites dated to the Republican period. Likewise, other items that indicate a desire to emulate Western styles of dress and habits also gain popularity during this period. Thimbles, buttons, medicine and perfume bottles, and hair tonic all indicate transformations in the realm of the body (Flores 2003). Canned goods and bottles, many of which originally contained alcoholic beverages, also increase at the indigenous sites, signaling modifications of diet and drinking practice (Scaramelli and Tarble 2003; Scaramelli 2005). In this context, I argue that the Western goods are being employed as status markers that serve to distinguish certain indigenous communities from their more traditional neighbors, and at the same time, signify an aperture to contact with the growing *Criollo* community in the area. Although these changes are profound, this process of transculturation did

not imply a loss of indigenous identity. It can even be argued that the use of many of these Western forms came to signify the new indigenous identity, rather than implying a «loss» of culture.<sup>5</sup>

I propose that the imported ceramic assemblage found in the Republican period indigenous sites serve to structure social action through visitation, gossip, and social interaction. Cups and saucers as well as plates and bowls make up the vast majority of imported ceramics at these sites. While tea was never a popular beverage in the area, coffee came to be an important item in the local diet. Today, a small cup of coffee, sweetened with sugar is the first thing that is offered upon a visit to both Mapoyo and *Criollo* homes in the area. References to this small ceremony abound in the documents from the nineteenth century, such as this account from the *Diary of Auguste Morisot*, a French painter who accompanied Chaffanjon in his expedition in search of the source of the Orinoco in 1886-1887:

At four o'clock we anchor at the site of the old Capuchin mission....Two Indians live there, in the midst of a swarm of women and children, naked and with swollen stomachs and rickety legs. They invite us in very cordially. Immediately, one of the women grinds the coffee although she lacks a coffee grinder. In a hollowed stone supported on a tripod made of poles, she grinds the grains with a round stone...(Morisot 2002, p. 272).

Visitation is and was a frequent and essential part of the daily routine, and the decorated, shiny, imported dishes provided the material vehicle for the social interaction revolving around the consumption of tobacco and beverages, and even meals themselves. The advent of the *sarrapia* boom, increased access to money, and the imported goods it could buy, brought about new additions to social etiquette and consumption that involved products such as coffee and imported alcoholic beverages (Morisot 2002 p. 265). It is probable that these beverages were closely tied to gender differentiation, with the former centered on the female domain and the latter on the male, paralleling patterns of more traditional hospitality that involved tobacco, manioc beer, and different kinds of stimulants and hallucinogens (Hugh-Jones 1995). The coffee ritual contrasts considerably with the traditional offering of manioc beer or other types of *chicha* to guests. Coffee is not native to the area, and is often bought rather than grown. It is not a food, but rather a stimulant. It must be roasted, ground, and filtered. It is served hot and in small quantities in cups, instead of the large, locally produced ceramic bowls or gourds typically used for *chicha*. These contrasts make it an ideal medium for conveying a message of emulation of the *Criollo* population and distinction from other more «traditional» indigenous groups in the area, especially in the female realm. At the same time, as a ritual intimately tied to visiting, it became an integral part of the daily interactions that reinforced the sense of community.

Visitation provides the opportunity for display and social intercourse. It is in the context of these visits that certain substances are offered by the host or hostess, and where styles are observed and discussed. It is easy to see how certain imported goods became icons of «civility», to be displayed and emulated contagiously within the community and beyond (Symanski 2002). This process has been described as the «epidemiological model of the spread of innovation», where each household that obtains the desired goods becomes «immune», but serves at the same time as a focus of infection for neighbors and friends, who will likely want to obtain similar items (Douglas and Isherwood 1996 pp. 71-73).

The adoption of coffee, a non-food, and the fragile, but showy cups and saucers that accompany its consumption, formed a «package» that served as a rank signifier, particularly in the feminine sphere of visitation. Its message was clearly one of distinction, where only the persons with access to cash could obtain the exotic commodities. It would be interesting to investigate further to see if the women themselves earned the money to invest

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5. Burley Burley, D. (1989). «Function, meaning and context: ambiguities in ceramic use by the Hivernant Metis of the Northwestern plains.» *Historical Archaeology* 23(1): 97-106. describes a similar situation among the Hivernant Metis of the Northwestern Plains of Canada, where the indigenous and mestizo population was actively involved in the fur trade. In spite of a highly mobile lifestyle, archaeological remains included significant quantities of fragile, imported Transfer-printed tablewares. To account for this apparent contradiction, Burley proposes that the ceramics were a highly visible marker of «civilized» manners that were originally adopted in the context of frontier towns to promote the desirability of the mestizo Metis women in the eyes of the European-American company officials who frequently took Metis wives. Through time, however, the Europeans began to bring in European wives, and the Metis were forced to make longer forays outside of the towns in search of hides. They eventually adopted a mobile, hunting life-style, but retained their use of tea wares. Burley argues that the importance of the imported wares no longer was to be found in the denotation of status, but rather centered on the importance of tea drinking as an essential part of the social world. «Social action» through tea drinking with its necessary requisite, cups and saucers, is integral to Metis ethnic integration; it provides a forum for structured interaction» (Ibid. p. 104).



in the «special» china and the coffee drunk in it, as in the case of the Moslem Hausa of Ibadan (Cohen in Douglas and Isherwood 1996 p. 103), or if they obtained it through their husbands or male kin.

## FINAL REMARKS: SCRAPING THE BOTTOM OF THE BOWL

Although few of us would like to have our lives summed up by mere reference to our kitchen cabinets, it is clear that the implements we use to cook and dine, to «grab a bite» or to «entertain in style,» do show a great deal about our sense of identity, our positioning in our social world, our taste, and our tastes. In many archaeological contexts, such as the one described in this paper, pots and dishes make up an overwhelmingly large proportion of the items recovered, and offer an invaluable source of inference about the people who made and used them. In the colonial and republican world of the Orinoco, pots played an active role in the distinction of the segments of the population, in terms of labor, gender, ethnicity, social etiquette, and cuisine. Traditions and transformations are evident in the sequence, where foodways both signified and defined, even while they evolved in a rapidly changing world.

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## TABLES

**Table 1. Periods defined for the archaeological sequence in the study area**

Period	Dates
Late pre-contact period	1400-1529
Conquest period	1530-1679
Early Colonial period	1680-1767
Late Colonial period	1768-1829
Republican period	1830-1920

**Table 2. Comparison of the count and percentage of local and imported ceramics in the central and peripheral zones of Pueblo de los Españoles (BO-119)**

Collection points at Pueblo de los Españoles	Number and Percentage of ceramic pieces				Total
	Local N°	%	Imported N°	%	
Central points	1172	85.7	196	14.3	1368
Peripheral points	885	94.0	56	6.0	941
Total	2057	89.1	252	10.9	2309

Note: The observed  $\chi^2 = 40.23 > \text{tabled } \chi^2$ ;  $\alpha = 0.05$ ; 1 degree of freedom. Percentages calculated for the total of imported and local wares found in each zone (central and peripheral).

**Table 3. Comparison of the count and percentage of local and imported ceramics collected in points of the western sector (22-34) and points of the eastern sector (datum-21)**

Collection points at Pueblo Viejo	N° and Percentage of ceramics pieces				Total
	Local N°	%	Imported N°	%	
Points datum-21	4346	96.7	150	3.3	4496
Points 22-34	916	80.7	219	19.3	1135
Total	5262	93.5	369	6.6	5631

Note: The observed  $\chi^2 = 376.91 > \text{tabled } \chi^2$ ;  $\alpha = 0.05$ ; 1 degree of freedom. Percentages calculated for the total of imported and local wares found in each zone (central and peripheral).

**Table 4. Inferred functions of Early Colonial vessel forms**

Reconstructed form	Vessel form	Inferred Function
Hemispherical bowls	1.0, 2.1, 2.2	Drinking, serving
Open bowls	3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 3.4	Serving
Open bowls	4.0, 6.0	Serving
Flanged bowls	8.1, 8.2, 9.1	Serving, cooking
Open plates	10.0	Serving
Budares	11.1, 11.2	Baking casabe and arepas
Open olla	13.1	Fermenting, boiling, rendering turtle oil
Closed olla	14.0, 17.0, 21.2, 22.1, 22.2	Boiling, storage
Everted rim jar	16.1, 16.2	Storage
Large olla	20.2, 20.3	Fermenting, boiling, rendering turtle oil
Jar	26.1, 26.2	Transport, storage of water and other liquids
Tinaja	27.0	Water storage, <i>chicha</i> storage
Bottle	29.0	Liquid storage
Cylindrical stamps	n.a.	Body paint
Perforated disks	n.a.	Spindle whorls
Figurines	n.a.	Ritual?

Note: n.a.= not applicable

## FIGURES

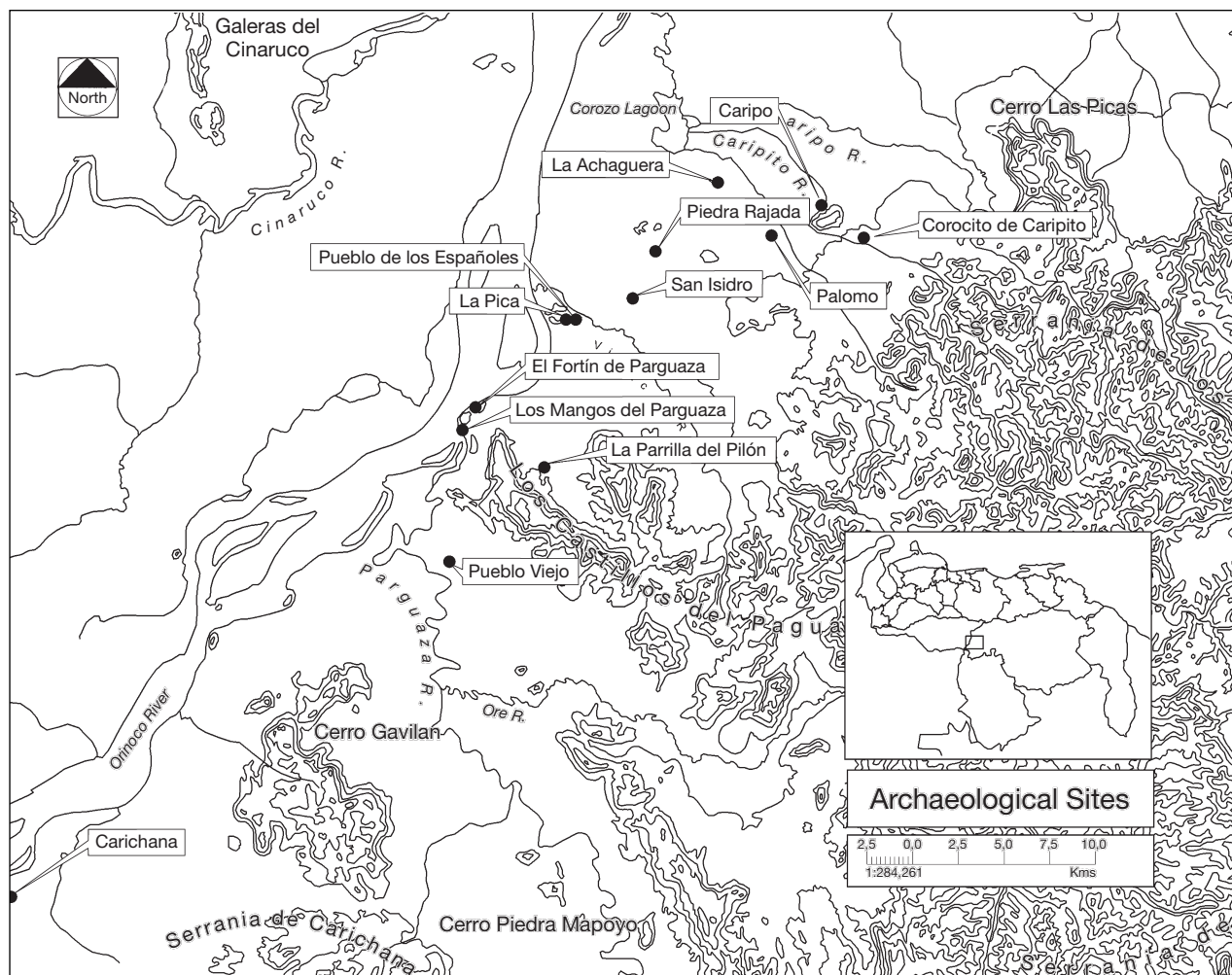


Figure 1. Map of study area with archaeological sites included in the ceramic analysis

Site	Approximate dates of occupation	Los Mangos Style	Valloid Style	Early Caraipé Style	San Isidro Style	Pueblo Viejo Style	Parguaza Style	Caripito Style (Late Caraipé)	
Piedra Rajada (Occupation 2)	1830-1920AD	Caripito Phase							
La Achagüera	1830-1920AD								
Caripito	1830-1920AD								
Palomo	1830-1920AD								
Corocito de Caripito	1830-1920AD								
La Pica	1767-1830AD	Pueblo Viejo Phase							
Pueblo Viejo	1767-1830AD								
Fortín del Parguaza	1731-1767AD					Pararuma Phase			
San Isidro	1731-1767AD								
Piedra Rajada (Occupation 1)	1731-1767AD								
Pueblo de Los Españoles	1731-1767AD								
Los Mangos	1200-1500AD			Camoruco Phase					
		Araquinoid Series		Valloid Series		Caraipé (undefined series)			

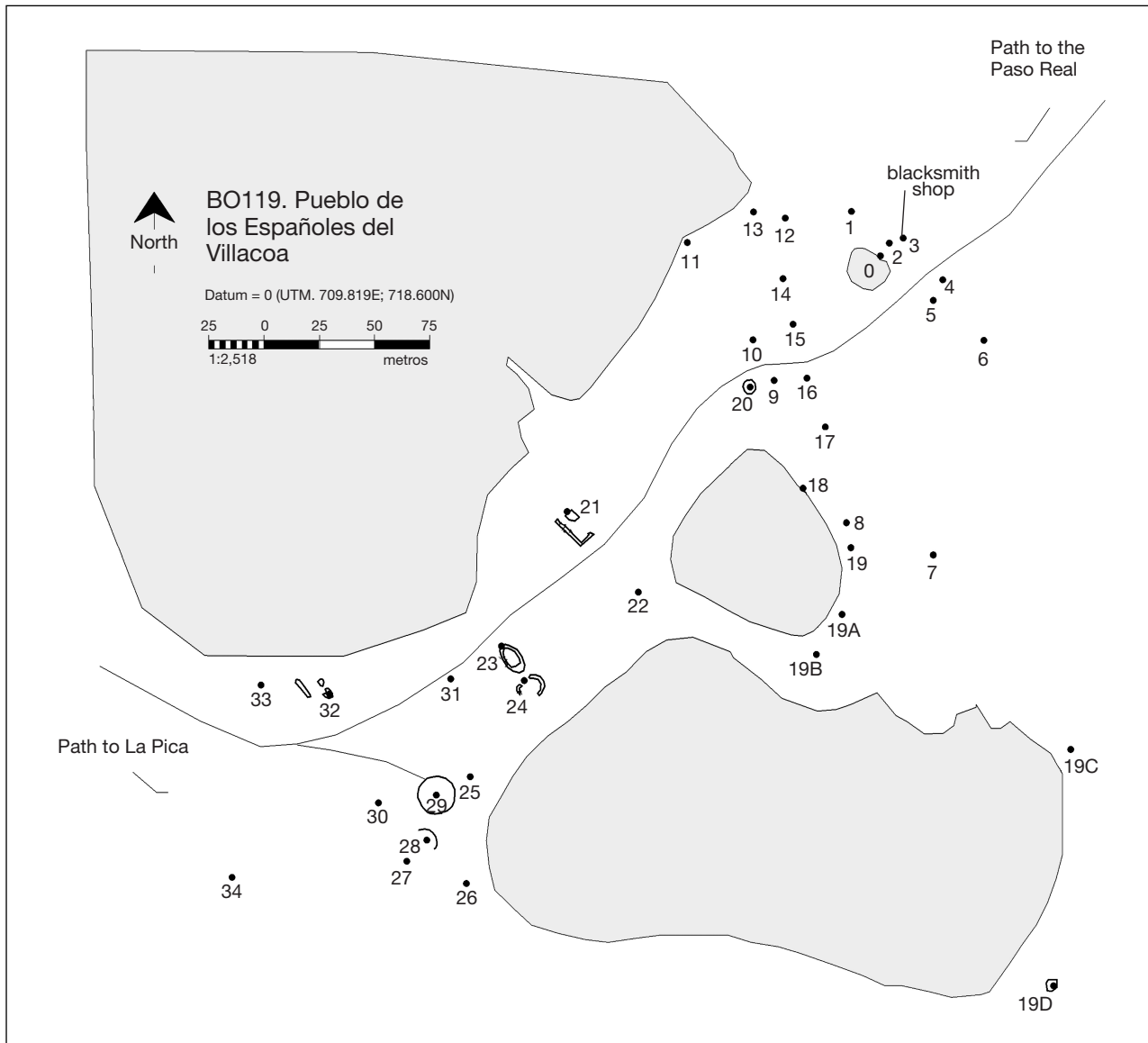


Figure 3. Map of the Pueblo de los Españoles site. This site corresponds to the Mission of Nuestra Señora de los Ángeles de Pararuma, occupied by the Jesuits between 1734-1747.



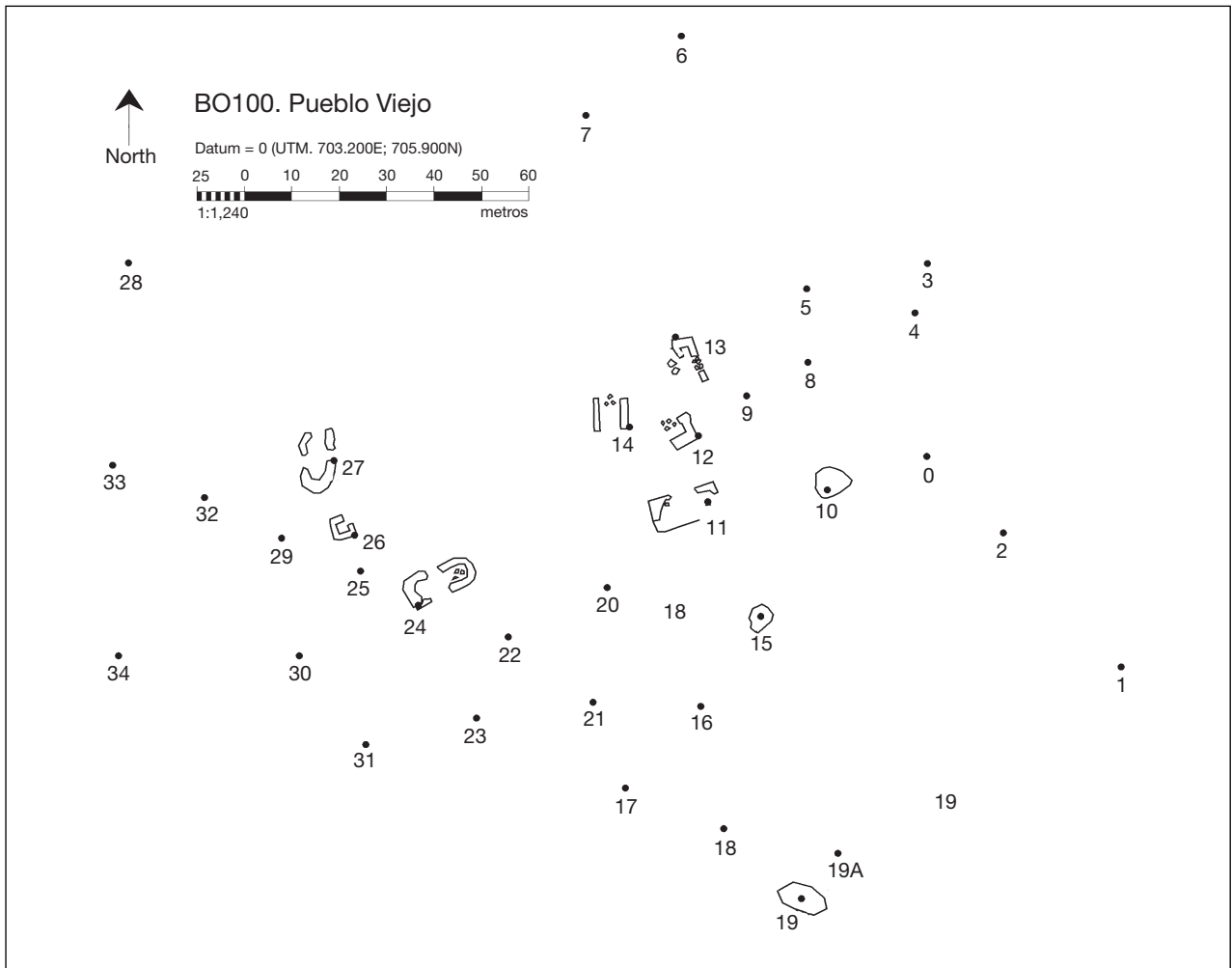


Figure 4. Map of Pueblo Viejo (BO-100) a Late Colonial site on the Parguaza River.

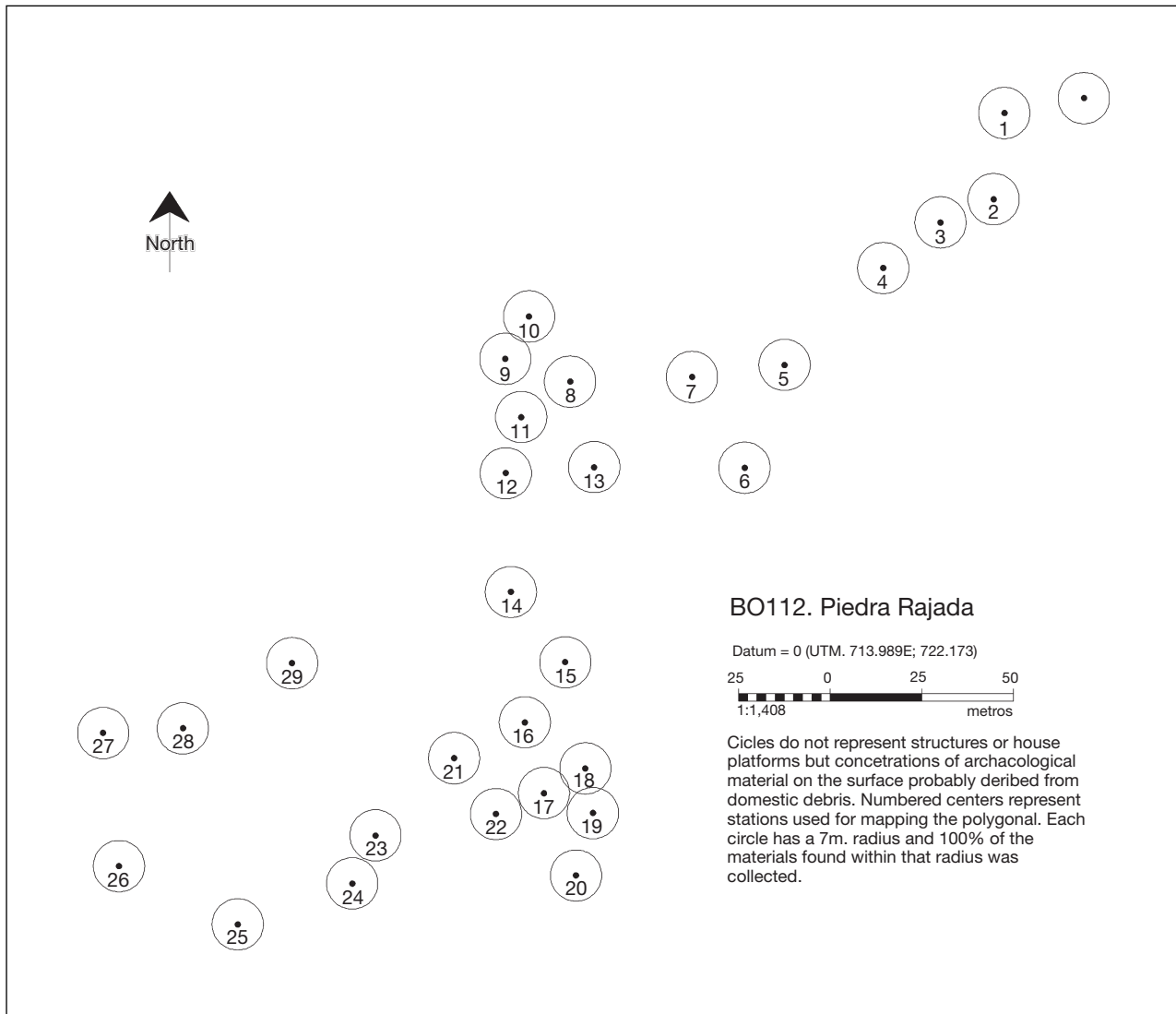


Figure 5. Map of the Piedra Rajada site, a multicomponent site corresponding to the Early Colonial and Republican Periods.

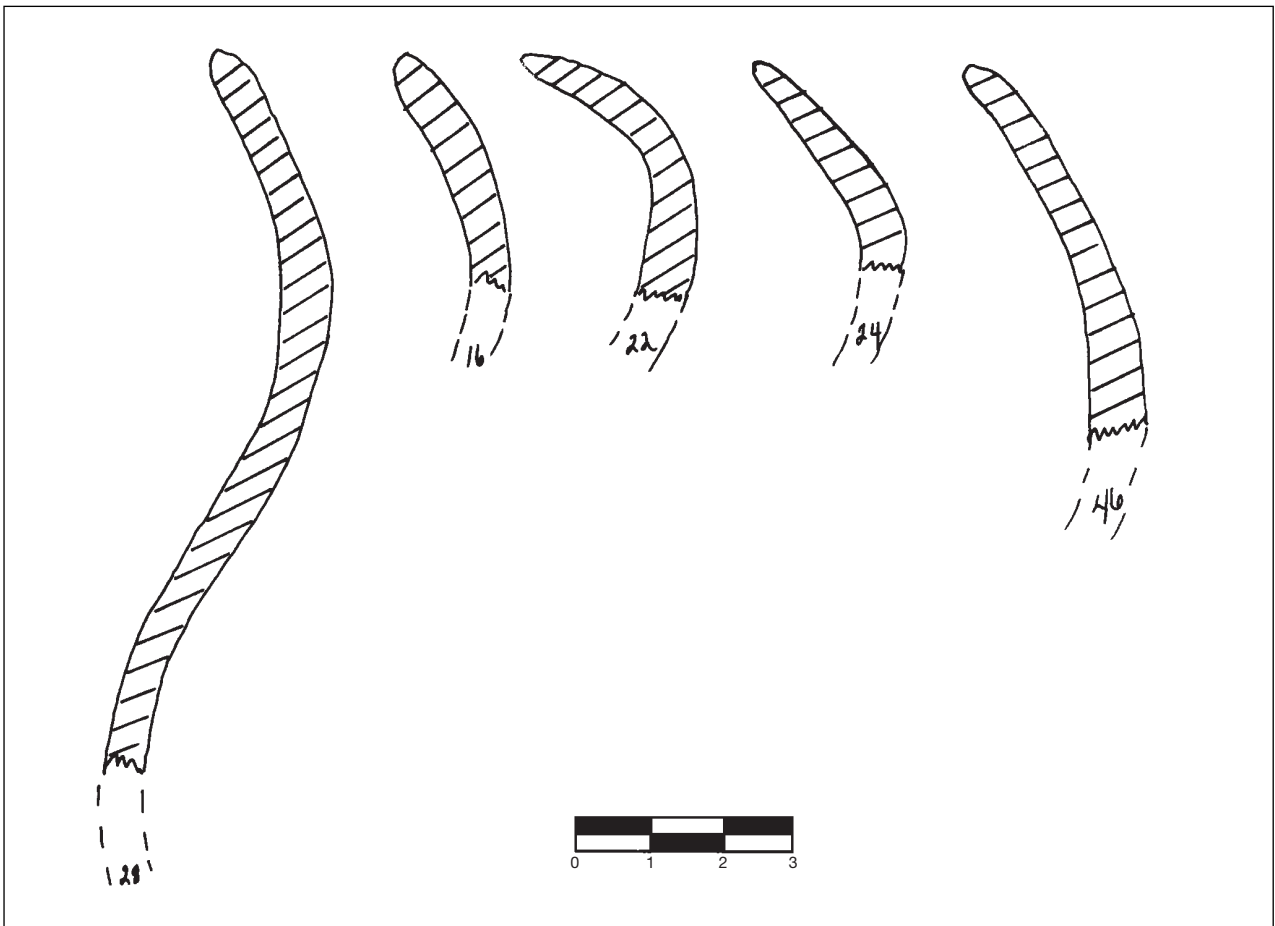


Figure 6. Rim forms associated with cooking pots found in central area of the Pueblo Viejo site.

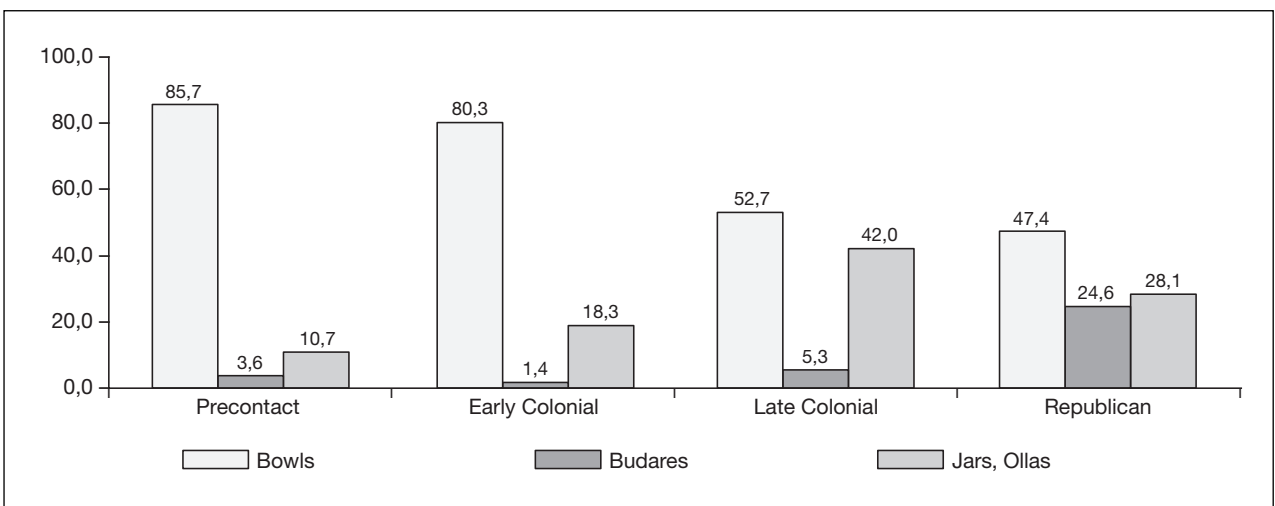


Figure 7: Distribution of grouped vessel forms according to period.